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Willard C. MacNaul.

The Jefferson-Lemen Compact: ... in

the Exclusion of Slavery from Illinois  
and the Northwest Territory ... (1915)

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# The Jefferson-Lemen Compact

## The Relations of Thomas Jefferson and James Lemen in the Exclusion of Slavery from Illinois and the Northwest Territory with Related Documents 1781-1818

A Paper read before the  
Chicago Historical Society  
February 16, 1915

By  
Willard C. MacNaught

EDMUND J. JAM



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## NOTE

The materials here presented were collected in connection with the preparation of a history of the first generation of Illinois Baptists. The narrative introduction is printed substantially as delivered at a special meeting of the Chicago Historical Society, and, with the collection of documents, is published in response to inquiries concerning the so-called "Lemen Family Notes," and in compliance with the request for a contribution to the publications of this Society. It is hoped that the publication may serve to elicit further information concerning the alleged "Notes," the existence of which has become a subject of more or less interest to historians. The compiler merely presents the materials at their face value, without assuming to pass critical judgment upon them.

W. C. M.



## INTRODUCTION

### RELATIONS OF JAMES LEMEN AND THOMAS JEFFERSON IN THE EXCLUSION OF SLAVERY FROM ILLINOIS AND THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY

In view of the approaching centennary of statehood in Illinois, the name of James Lemen takes on a timely interest because of his services — social, religious, and political — in the making of the Commonwealth. He was a native of Virginia, born and reared in the vicinity of Harper's Ferry. He served a two-years' enlistment in the Revolutionary War under Washington, and afterwards returned to his regiment during the siege of Yorktown. His "Yorktown Notes" in his diary give some interesting glimpses of his participation in that campaign.<sup>1</sup> His Scotch ancestors had served in a similar cause under Cromwell, whose wedding gift to one of their number is still cherished as a family heirloom.

Upon leaving the army James Lemen married Catherine Ogle, daughter of Captain Joseph Ogle, whose name is perpetuated in that of Ogle county, Illinois. The Ogles were of old English stock, some of whom at least were found on the side of Cromwell and the Commonwealth. Catherine's family at one time lived on the South Branch of the Potomac, although at the time of her marriage her home was near Wheeling. Captain Ogle's commission, signed by Gov. Patrick Henry, is now a valued possession of one of Mrs. Lemen's descendents. James and Catherine Lemen were well fitted by nature and training for braving the hardships and brightening the privations of life on the frontier, far removed from home and friends, or even the abodes of their nearest white kinsmen.

During, and even before the war, young Lemen is reputed to have been the protégé of Thomas Jefferson, through whose influence he became a civil and religious leader in the pioneer period of Illinois history. Gov. Reynolds, in his writings relating to this period,<sup>2</sup> gives various sketches of the man and his family, and his name occurs frequently

in the records of the times. He was among the first to follow Col. Clark's men to the Illinois country, where he established the settlement of New Design, one of the earliest American colonies in what was, previous to his arrival, the "Illinois county" of the Old Dominion. Here he served, first as a justice of the peace, and then as a judge of the court of the original county of St. Clair, and thus acquired the title of "Judge Lemen."<sup>3</sup> Here, too, he became the progenitor of the numerous Illinois branch of the Lemen family, whose genealogy and family history was recently published by Messrs. Frank and Joseph B. Lemen — a volume of some four hundred and fifty pages, and embracing some five hundred members of the family.

True to his avowed purpose in coming to Illinois, young Lemen became a leader of anti-slavery sentiment in the new Territory, and, undoubtedly, deserves to be called one of the Fathers of the Free State Constitution, which was framed in 1818 and preserved in 1824. His homestead, the "Old Lemen Fort" at New Design, which is still the comfortable home of the present owner, is the birthplace of the Baptist denomination in Illinois; and he himself is commemorated as the recognized founder of that faith in this State, by a granite shaft in the family burial plot directly in front of the old home. This memorial was dedicated in 1909 by Col. William Jennings Bryan, whose father, Judge Bryan, of Salem, Illinois, was the first to suggest it as a well-deserved honor.

James Lemen, Sr., also became the father and leader of the noted "Lemen Family Preachers," consisting of himself and six stalwart sons, all but one of whom were regularly ordained Baptist ministers. The eldest son, Robert, although never ordained, was quite as active and efficient in the cause as any of the family. This remarkable family eventually became the nucleus of a group of anti-slavery Baptist churches in Illinois which had a very important influence upon the issue of that question in the State. Rev. James Lemen, Jr., who is said to have been the second American boy born in the Illinois country, succeeded to his father's position of leadership in the anti-slavery movement of the times, and served as the representative of St. Clair county in the Territorial Legislature, the Constitutional Convention, and the State Senate. The younger James Lemen was on terms of intimacy with Abraham Lincoln at Springfield,

and his cousin, Ward Lamon, was Lincoln's early associate in the law, and also his first biographer. Various representatives of the family in later generations have attained success as farmers, physicians, teachers, ministers, and lawyers throughout southern Illinois and other sections of the country.<sup>4</sup>

The elder James Lemen was himself an interesting character, and, entirely apart from his relations with Jefferson, he is a significant factor in early Illinois history. His fight for free versus slave labor in Illinois and the Northwest derives a peculiar interest, however, from its association with the great name of Jefferson. The principles for which the latter stood — but not necessarily his policies — have a present-day interest for us greater than those of his contemporaries, because those principles are the "live issues" of our own times. Jefferson is to that extent our contemporary, and hence his name lends a living interest to otherwise obscure persons and remote events. The problem of free labor versus slave labor we have with us still, and in a much more complex and widespread form than in Jefferson's day.

According to the current tradition, a warm personal friendship sprang up between Jefferson and young Lemen, who was seventeen years the junior of his distinguished patron and friend. In a letter to Robert, brother of James Lemen, attributed to Jefferson, he writes: "Among all my friends who are near, he is still a little nearer. I discovered his worth when he was but a child, and I freely confess that in some of my most important achievements his example, wish, and advice, though then but a very young man, largely influenced my action." In a sketch of the relations of the two men by Dr. John M. Peck we are told that "after Jefferson became President of the United States, he retained all of his early affection for Mr. Lemen"; and upon the occasion of a visit of a mutual friend to the President, in 1808, "he inquired after him with all the fondness of a father."<sup>5</sup>

Their early relations in Virginia, so far as we have any account of them, concerned their mutual anti-slavery interests. Peck tells us that "Mr. Lemen was a born anti-slavery leader, and had proved himself such in Virginia by inducing scores of masters to free their slaves through his prevailing kindness of manner and Christian arguments."



Concerning the cession of Virginia's claims to the Northwest Territory, Jefferson is thus quoted, from his letter to Robert Lemen: "Before any one had even mentioned the matter, James Lemen, by reason of his devotion to anti-slavery principles, suggested to me that we (Virginia) make the transfer, and that slavery be excluded; and it so impressed and influenced me that whatever is due me as credit for my share in the matter, is largely, if not wholly, due to James Lemen's advice and most righteous counsel."<sup>5</sup>

Before this transfer was effected, it appears that Jefferson had entered into negotiations with his young protégé with a view to inducing him to locate in the "Illinois country" as his agent, in order to co-operate with himself in the effort to exclude slavery from the entire Northwest Territory. Mr. Lemen makes record of an interview with Jefferson under date of December 11, 1782, as follows: "Thomas Jefferson had me to visit him again a short time ago, as he wanted me to go to the Illinois country in the Northwest after a year or two, in order to try to lead and direct the new settlers in the best way, and also to oppose the introduction of slavery into that country at a later day, as I am known as an opponent of that evil; and he says he will give me some help. It is all because of his great kindness and affection for me, for which I am very grateful; but I have not yet fully decided to do so, but have agreed to consider the case." In May, 1784, they had another interview, on the eve of Jefferson's departure on his prolonged mission to France. Mr. Lemen's memorandum reads: "I saw Jefferson at Annapolis, Maryland, to-day, and had a very pleasant visit with him. I have consented to go to Illinois on his mission, and he intends helping me some; but I did not ask nor wish it. We had a full agreement and understanding as to all terms and duties. The agreement is strictly private between us, but all his purposes are perfectly honorable and praiseworthy."<sup>6</sup>

Thus the mission was undertaken which proved to be his life-work. He had intended starting with his father-in-law, Captain Ogle, in 1785, but was detained by illness in his family. December 28, 1785, he records: "Jefferson's confidential agent gave me one hundred dollars of his funds to use for my family, if need be, and if not, to go to good causes; and I will go to Illinois on his mission next spring and take my wife and children."



Such was the origin and nature of the so-called "Jefferson-Lemen Secret Anti-Slavery Compact," the available evidence concerning which will be given at the conclusion of this paper.<sup>7</sup> The anti-slavery propaganda of James Lemen and his circle constituted a determining factor in the history of the first generation of Illinois Baptists. To what extent Lemen co-operated with Jefferson in his movements will appear as we proceed with the story of his efforts to make Illinois a free State.

The "Old Dominion" ceded her "county of Illinois" to the National domain in 1784. Jefferson's effort to provide for the exclusion of slavery from the new Territory at that date proved abortive. Consequently, when James Lemen arrived at the old French village of Kaskaskia in July, 1786, he found slavery legally entrenched in all the former French possessions in the "Illinois country." It had been introduced by Renault, in 1719, who brought 500 negroes from Santo Domingo (then a French possession) to work the mines which he expected to develop in this section of the French Colonial Empire.<sup>8</sup> It is a noteworthy fact that slavery was established on the soil of Illinois just a century after its introduction on the shores of Virginia. When the French possessions were taken over by Great Britain at the close of the colonial struggle in 1763, that country guaranteed the French inhabitants the possession of all their property, including slaves. When Col. Clark, of Virginia, took possession of this region in 1778, the State likewise guaranteed the inhabitants the full enjoyment of all their property rights. By the terms of the Virginia cession of 1784 to the National Government, all the rights and privileges of the former citizens of Virginia were assured to them in the ceded district. Thus, at the time of Lemen's arrival, slavery had been sanctioned on the Illinois prairies for sixty-seven years. One year from the date of his arrival, however, the Territorial Ordinance of 1787 was passed, with the prohibition of slavery, as originally proposed by Jefferson in 1784.<sup>9</sup> Thus it would seem that the desired object had already been attained. By the terms of the famous "Sixth Article of Compact," contained in that Ordinance, it was declared that "there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said Territory, otherwise than in the punishment of crimes whereof the accused shall have been duly convicted." This looks like a sweeping and final disposition

of the matter, but it was not accepted as such until the lapse of another fifty-seven years. But neither Jefferson nor his agents on the ground had anticipated so easy a victory. Indeed, they had foreseen that a determined effort would be made by the friends of slavery to legalize that institution in the Territory. Almost at once, in fact, the conflict commenced, which was to continue actively for thirty-seven years. Like the Nation itself, the Illinois country was to be for a large part of its history "half slave and half free"—both in sentiment and in practice.

Two attempts against the integrity of the "Sixth Article" were made during Gov. St. Clair's administration. The trouble began with the appeals of the French slave-holders against the loss of their slaves.<sup>10</sup> As civil administration under the Territorial government was not established among the Illinois settlements until 1790, both the old French inhabitants and the new American colonists suffered all manner of disabilities and distresses in the interval between 1784 and 1790, while just across the Mississippi there was a settled and prosperous community under the Spanish government of Louisiana. When, therefore, the French masters appealed to Gen. St. Clair, in 1787, to protect them against the loss of the principal part of their wealth, represented by their slaves, he had to face the alternative of the loss of these substantial citizens by migration with their slaves to the Spanish side of the river. And, in order to pacify these petitioners, St. Clair gave it as his opinion that the prohibition of slavery in the Ordinance was not retroactive, and hence did not affect the rights of the French masters in their previously acquired slave property. As this view accorded with the "compact" contained in the Virginia deed of cession, it was sanctioned by the old Congress, and was later upheld by the new Federal Government; and this construction of the Ordinance of 1787 continued to prevail in Illinois until 1845, when the State Supreme Court decreed that the prohibition was absolute, and that, consequently, slavery in any form had never had any legal sanction in Illinois since 1787.<sup>11</sup>

It does not appear that Mr. Lemen took any active measures against this construction of the anti-slavery ordinance at the time. He was, indeed, himself a petitioner, with other American settlers on the "Congress lands" in Illinois, for the recognition of their claims, which were

menaced by the general prohibition of settlement then in effect.<sup>12</sup> Conditions in every respect were so insecure prior to the organization of St. Clair county in 1790, that it was hardly to be expected that any vigorous measure could be taken against previously existing slavery in the colony, especially as the Americans were then living in station forts for protection against the hostile Indians. Moreover, Jefferson was not in the country in 1787, and hence there was no opportunity for co-operation with him at this time. Mr. Lemen was, however, improving the opportunity "to try to lead and direct the new settlers in the best way"; for we find him, although not as yet himself a "professor" of religion, engaged in promoting the religious observance of the Sabbath on the part of the "godfearing" element in the station fort where, with his father-in-law, he resided (Fort Piggott). In 1789 Jefferson returned from France to become Secretary of State in President Washington's cabinet, under the new Federal Government. He had not forgotten his friend Lemen, as Dr. Peck assures us that "he lost no time in sending him a message of love and confidence by a friend who was then coming to the West."

St. Clair's construction of the prohibition of slavery unfortunately served to weaken even its preventive force and emboldened the pro-slavery advocates to seek persistently for the repeal, or, at least, the "suspension" of the obnoxious Sixth Article. A second effort was made under his administration in 1796, when a memorial, headed by Gen. John Edgar, was sent to Congress praying for the suspension of the Article. The committee of reference, of which the Hon. Joshua Coit of Connecticut was chairman, reported adversely upon this memorial, May 12, 1796.<sup>13</sup> It is not possible to state positively Lemen's influence, if any, in the defeat of this appeal of the leading citizens of the old French villages. But, as it was in this same year that the first Protestant church in the bounds of Illinois was organized in his house, and, as we are informed that he endeavored to persuade the constituent members of the New Design church to oppose slavery, we may suppose that he was already taking an active part in opposition to the further encroachments of slavery, especially in his own community.

The effort to remove the prohibition was renewed under Gov. Wm. Henry Harrison, during the connection of the

Illinois settlements with the Indiana Territory, from 1800 to 1809. Five separate attempts were made during these years, which coincide with the term of President Jefferson, who had removed St. Clair to make room for Gen. Harrison. Harrison, however, yielded to the pressure of the pro-slavery element in the Territory to use his power and influence for their side of the question. Although their proposals were thrice favorably reported from committee, the question never came to a vote in Congress. The first attempt during the Indiana period was that of a pro-slavery convention, called at the instigation of the Illinois contingent, which met at Vincennes, in 1803, under the chairmanship of Gov. Harrison. Their memorial to Congress, requesting merely a temporary suspension of the prohibition, was adversely reported from committee in view of the evident prosperity of Ohio under the same restriction, and because "the committee deem it highly dangerous and inexpedient to impair a provision wisely calculated to promote the happiness and prosperity of the Northwestern country, and to give strength and security to that extensive frontier." Referring to this attempt of "the extreme southern slave advocates . . . for the introduction of slavery," Mr. Lemen writes, under date of May 3, 1803, that "steps must soon be taken to prevent that curse from being fastened on our people." The same memorial was again introduced in Congress in February, 1804, with the provisos of a ten-year limit to the suspension and the introduction of native born slaves only, which, of course, would mean those of the border-state breeders. Even this modified proposal, although approved in committee, failed to move Congress to action. Harrison and his supporters continued nevertheless to press the matter, and he even urged Judge Lemen, in a personal interview, to lend his influence to the movement for the introduction of slavery. To this suggestion Lemen replied that "the evil attempt would encounter his most active opposition, in every possible and honorable manner that his mind could suggest or his means accomplish."<sup>14</sup>

It was about this time that the Governor and judges took matters in their own hands and introduced a form of indentured service, which, although technically within the prohibition of *involuntary* servitude, amounted practically to actual slavery. Soon after, in order to give this institution a more secure legal sanction, by legislative en-



actment, the second grade of territorial government was hastily and high-handedly forced upon the people for this purpose. It was probably in view of these measures that Mr. Lemen recorded his belief that President Jefferson "will find means to overreach the evil attempts of the pro-slavery party." Early in the year 1806 the Vincennes memorial was introduced into Congress for the third time and again favorably reported from committee, but to no avail. It was about this time, as we learn from his diary, that Mr. Lemen "sent a messenger to Indiana to ask the churches and people there to get up and sign a counter petition, to uphold freedom in the Territory," circulating a similar petition in Illinois himself.<sup>15</sup>

A fourth attempt to bring the proposal before Congress was made in January, 1807, in a formal communication from the Governor and Territorial Legislature. The proposal was a third time favorably reported by the committee of reference, but still without action by the House. Finally, in November of the same year, President Jefferson transmitted to Congress similar communications from the Indiana government. This time the committee reported that "the citizens of Clark county [in which was located the first Baptist church organized in Indiana], in their remonstrance, express their sense of the impropriety of the measure"; and that they also requested Congress not to act upon the subject until the people had an opportunity to formulate a State Constitution.<sup>16</sup> Commenting upon the whole proceedings, Dr. Peck quotes Gov. Harrison to the effect that, though he and Lemen were firm friends, the latter "had set his iron will against slavery, and indirectly made his influence felt so strongly at Washington and before Congress, that all the efforts to suspend the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787 failed."<sup>17</sup> Peck adds that President Jefferson "quietly directed his leading confidential friends in Congress steadily to defeat Gen. Harrison's petitions for the repeal."<sup>17</sup>

It was about this time, September 10, 1807, that President Jefferson thus expressed his estimate of James Lemen's services, in his letter to Robert Lemen: "His record in the new country has fully justified my course in inducing him to settle there with the view of properly shaping events in the best interest of the people."<sup>18</sup> It was during this period of the Indiana agitation for the introduction of

slavery, as we learn from an entry in his diary dated September 10, 1806, that Mr. Lemen received a call from an agent of Aaron Burr to solicit his aid and sympathy in Burr's scheme for a southwestern empire, with Illinois as a Province, and an offer to make him governor. "But I denounced the conspiracy as high treason," he says, "and gave him a few hours to leave the Territory on pain of arrest."<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that at this date he was not himself a magistrate, which, perhaps, accounts for his apparent leniency towards what he regarded as a treasonable proposal.

The year 1809, the date of the separation of Illinois from the Indiana Territory, marks a crisis in the Lemen anti-slavery campaign in Illinois.<sup>20</sup> The agitation under the Indiana government for the further recognition of slavery in the Territory was mainly instigated by the Illinois slaveholders and their sympathizers among the American settlers from the slave states. The people of Indiana proper, except those of the old French inhabitants of Vincennes, who were possessed of slaves, were either indifferent or hostile towards slavery. Its partisans in the Illinois counties of the Territory, in the hope of promoting their object thereby, now sought division of the Indiana Territory and the erection of a separate government for Illinois at Kaskaskia. This movement aroused a bitter political struggle in the Illinois settlements, one result of which was the murder of young Rice Jones in the streets of Kaskaskia. The division was advocated on the ground of convenience and opposed on the score of expense. The divisionists, however, seem to have been animated mainly by the desire to secure the introduction of slavery as soon as statehood could be attained for their section. The division was achieved in 1809, and with it the prompt adoption of the system of indentured service already in vogue under the Indiana government. And from that time forth the fight was on between the free-state and slave-state parties in the new Territory. Throughout the independent territorial history of Illinois, slavery was sanctioned partly by law and still further by custom. Gov. Ninian Edwards, whose religious affiliations were with the Baptists, not only sanctioned slavery, but, as is well known, was himself the owner of slaves during the territorial period.

It was in view of this evident determination to make of Illinois Territory a slave state, that James Lemen, with Jefferson's approval, took the radical step of organizing

a distinctively anti-slavery church as a means of promoting the free-state cause.<sup>21</sup> From the first, indeed, he had sought to promote the cause of temperance and of anti-slavery in and through the church. He tells us in his diary, in fact, that he "hoped to employ the churches as a means of opposition to the institution of slavery."<sup>21</sup> He was reared in the Presbyterian faith, his stepfather being a minister of that persuasion; but at twenty years of age he embraced Baptist principles, apparently under the influence of a Baptist minister in Virginia, whose practice it was to bar from membership all who upheld the institution of slavery. He thus identified himself with the struggles for civil, religious, and industrial liberty, all of which were then actively going on in his own state.

The name of "New Design," which became attached to the settlement which he established on the upland prairies beyond the bluffs of the "American Bottom," is said to have originated from a quaint remark of his that he "had a 'new design' to locate a settlement south of Bellefontaine" near the present town of Waterloo.<sup>22</sup> The name "New Design," however, became significant of his anti-slavery mission; and when, after ten years of pioneer struggles, he organized The Baptist Church of Christ at New Design, in 1796, he soon afterwards induced that body — the first Protestant church in the bounds of the present State — to adopt what were known as "Tarrant's Rules Against Slavery." The author of these rules, the Rev. James Tarrant, of Virginia, later of Kentucky, one of the "emancipating preachers," eventually organized the fraternity of anti-slavery Baptist churches in Kentucky, who called themselves "Friends to Humanity."

From 1796 to 1809 Judge Lemen was active in the promotion of Baptist churches and a Baptist Association. He labored to induce all these organizations to adopt his anti-slavery principles, and in this he was largely successful; but, with the increase of immigrant Baptists from the slave states, it became increasingly difficult to maintain these principles in their integrity. And when, in the course of the campaign for the division of the Territory in 1808, it became apparent that the lines between the free-state and the slave-state forces were being decisively drawn, Lemen prepared to take a more radical stand in the struggle. With this design in view he asked and obtained the formal sanction

of his church as a licensed preacher. In the course of the same year, 1808, he is said to have received a confidential message from Jefferson "suggesting a division of the churches on the question of slavery, and the organization of a church on a strictly anti-slavery basis, for the purpose of heading a movement to make Illinois a free state."<sup>21</sup> According to another, and more probable, version of this story, when Jefferson learned, through a mutual friend (Mr. S. H. Biggs), of Lemen's determination to force the issue in the church to the point of division, if necessary, he sent him a message of approval of his proposed course and accompanied it with a contribution of \$20 for the contemplated anti-slavery church.

The division of the Territory was effected early in the year 1809, and in the summer of that year, after vainly trying to hold all the churches to their avowed anti-slavery principles, Elder Lemen, in a sermon at Richland Creek Baptist church, threw down the gauntlet to his pro-slavery brethren and declared that he could no longer maintain church fellowship with them. His action caused a division in the church, which was carried into the Association at its ensuing meeting, in October, 1809, and resulted in the disruption of that body into three parties on the slavery question — the conservatives, the liberals, and the radicals. The latter element, headed by "the Lemen party," as it now came to be called, held to the principles of The Friends to Humanity, and proposed to organize a branch of that order of Baptists. When it came to the test, however, the new church was reduced to a constituent membership consisting of some seven or eight members of the Lemen family. Such was the beginning of what is now the oldest surviving Baptist church in the State, which then took the name of "The Baptized Church of Christ, Friends to Humanity, on Cantine (Quentin) Creek." It is located in the neighborhood of the old Cahokia mound. Its building, when it came to have one, was called "Bethel Meeting House," and in time the church itself became known as "Bethel Baptist Church."

The distinctive basis of this church is proclaimed in its simple constitution, to which every member was required to subscribe: "Denying union and communion with all persons holding the doctrine of perpetual, involuntary, hereditary slavery." This church began its career as "a family church," in the literal sense of the word; but it pros-



pered nevertheless, until it became a numerically strong and vigorous organization which has had an active and honorable career of a hundred years' duration. Churches of the same name and principles multiplied and maintained their uncompromising but discriminating opposition to slavery so long as slavery remained a local issue; after which time they were gradually absorbed into the general body of ordinary Baptist churches.

During the period of the Illinois Territory, 1809 to 1818, Elder Lemen kept up a most energetic campaign of opposition to slavery, by preaching and rigorous church discipline in the application of the rules against slavery. He himself was regularly ordained soon after the organization of his anti-slavery church. His sons, James and Joseph, and his brother-in-law, Benjamin Ogle, were equally active in the ministry during this period, and, before its close, they had two churches firmly established in Illinois, with others of the same order in Missouri.

"The church, properly speaking, never entered politics," Dr. Peck informs us, "but presently, when it became strong, the members all formed what they called the 'Illinois Anti-Slavery League,' and it was this body that conducted the anti-slavery contest."<sup>23</sup> The contest culminated in the campaign for statehood in 1818.

At the beginning of that year the Territorial Legislature petitioned Congress for an Enabling Act, which was presented by the Illinois Delegate, Hon. Nathaniel Pope. As chairman of the committee to which this petition was referred, he drew up a bill for such an act early in the year. In the course of its progress through the House, he presented an amendment to his own bill, which provided for the extension of the northern boundary of the new state. According to the provisions of the Ordinance of 1787, the line would have been drawn through the southern border of Lake Michigan. Pope's amendment proposed to extend it so as to include some sixty miles of frontage on Lake Michigan, thereby adding fourteen counties, naturally tributary to the lake region, to counterbalance the southern portion of the State, which was connected by the river system with the southern slave states. Gov. Thomas Ford states explicitly that Pope made this change "upon his own responsibility, . . . no one at that time having suggested or requested it." This statement is directly contradicted

in Dr. Peck's sketch of James Lemen, Sr., written in 1857. He therein states that this extension was first suggested by Judge Lemen, who had a government surveyor make a plat of the proposed extension, with the advantages to the anti-slavery cause to be gained thereby noted on the document, which he gave to Pope with the request to have it embodied in the Enabling Act.<sup>24</sup> This statement was repeated and amplified by Mr. Joseph B. Lemen in an article in *The Chicago Tribune*.<sup>25</sup> It is a well-known fact that the vote of these fourteen northern counties secured the State to the anti-slavery party in 1856; but as this section of the State was not settled until long after its admission into the Union, the measure, whatever its origin, had no effect upon the Constitutional Convention. However, John Messinger, of New Design, who surveyed the Military Tract and, later, also the northern boundary line, may very well have made such a plat, either on his own motion or at the suggestion of the zealous anti-slavery leader, with whom he was well acquainted. As Messinger was later associated with Peck in the Rock Spring Seminary, and in the publication of a sectional map of Illinois, it would seem that Peck was in a position to know the facts as well as Ford.

In the campaign for the election of delegates to the Constitutional Convention, slavery was the only question seriously agitated. The Lemen churches and their sympathizers were so well organized and so determined in purpose that they made a very energetic and effective campaign for delegates. Their organization for political purposes, as Peck informs us, "always kept one of its members and several of its friends in the Territorial Legislature; and five years before the constitutional election in 1818, it had fifty resident agents — men of like sympathies — quietly at work in the several settlements; and the masterly manner in which they did their duty was shown by a poll which they made of the voters some few weeks before the election, which, on their side, varied only a few votes from the official count after the election."<sup>23</sup>

It is difficult to determine from the meager records of the proceedings, even including the Journal of the Convention recently published, just what the complexion of the body was on the slavery question. Mr. W. Kitchell, a descendant of one of the delegates, states that there were twelve delegates that favored the recognition of slavery by

a specific article in the Constitution, and twenty-one that opposed such action. Gov. Coles, who was present as a visitor and learned the sentiments of the prominent members, says that many, but not a majority of the Convention, were in favor of making Illinois a slave state.<sup>26</sup> During the session of the Convention an address to The Friends of Freedom was published by a company of thirteen leading men, including James Lemen, Sr., to the effect that a determined effort was to be made in the Convention to give sanction to slavery, and urging concerted action "to defeat the plans of those who wish either a temporary or an unlimited slavery."<sup>27</sup> A majority of the signers of this address were Lemen's Baptist friends, and its phraseology points to him as its author.

James Lemen, Jr., was a delegate from St. Clair county and a member of the committee which drafted the Constitution. In the original draft of that instrument, slavery was prohibited in the identical terms of the Ordinance of 1787, as we learn from the recently published journal of the Convention. In the final draft this was changed to read: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall hereafter be introduced," and the existing system of indentured service was also incorporated. These changes were the result of compromise, and Lemen consistently voted against them. He was nevertheless one of the committee of three appointed to revise and engross the completed instrument.

The result was a substantial victory for the Free-State Party; and had the Convention actually overridden the prohibition contained in the original Territorial Ordinance, as it was then interpreted, it is evident, from the tone of the address to The Friends of Freedom, that the Lemen circle would have made a determined effort to defeat the measure in Congress.<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Peck, who, like Gov. Coles, was a visitor to the Convention, and who had every opportunity to know all the facts, in summing up the evidence in regard to the matter, declares it to be "conclusive that Mr. Lemen created and organized the forces which confirmed Illinois, if not the Northwest Territory, to freedom." Speaking of the current impression that the question of slavery was not much agitated in Illinois prior to the Constitutional Convention, Gov. Coles says: "On the contrary, at a very early period of the settlement of Illinois, the question was warmly agitated by

zealous advocates and opponents of slavery," and that, although during the period of the independent Illinois Territory the agitation was lulled, it was not extinguished, "as was seen [from] its mingling itself so actively both in the election and the conduct of the members of the Convention, in 1818."<sup>26</sup>

Senator Douglas, in a letter to James Lemen, Jr., is credited with full knowledge of the "Jefferson-Lemen Anti-Slavery Compact" and a high estimate of its significance in the history of the slavery contest in Illinois and the Northwest Territory. "This matter assumes a phase of personal interest with me," he says, "and I find myself, politically, in the good company of Jefferson and your father. With them everything turned on whether the people of the Territory wanted slavery or not, . . . and that appears to me to be the correct doctrine."<sup>28</sup> Lincoln, too, in a letter to the younger James Lemen, is quoted as having a personal knowledge of the facts and great respect for the senior Lemen in the conflict for a free state in Illinois. "Both your father and Lovejoy," he remarks, "were pioneer leaders in the cause of freedom, and it has always been difficult for me to see why your father, who was a resolute, uncompromising, and aggressive leader, who boldly proclaimed his purpose to make both the Territory and the State free, never aroused nor encountered any of that mob violence which, both in St. Louis and in Alton, confronted and pursued Lovejoy."<sup>29</sup> Of the latter he says: "His letters, among your old family notes, were of more interest to me than even those of Thomas Jefferson to your father."

Jefferson's connection with Lemen's anti-slavery mission in Illinois was never made public, apparently, until the facts were published by Mr. Joseph B. Lemen, of the third generation, in the later years of his life, in connection with the centenary anniversaries of the events involved. However, the "compact" was a matter of family tradition, based upon a collection of letters and notes handed down from father to son. Jefferson's reasons for keeping the matter secret, as Dr. Peck explains, were, first, to prevent giving the impression that he was seeking his own interests in the territories, and, second, to avoid arousing the opposition of his southern friends who desired the extension of slavery. Lemen, on the other hand, did not wish to have it thought that his actions were controlled by political considerations, or



subject to the will of another. Moreover, when he learned that Jefferson was regarded as "an unbeliever," he is said to have wept bitterly lest it should be thought that, in his work for the church and humanity, he had been influenced by an "infidel"; and, sometime before his death, he exacted a promise of his sons and the few friends who were acquainted with the nature of his compact with Jefferson that they would not make it known while he lived.<sup>30</sup> Under the influence of this feeling on the part of their father, the family kept the facts to themselves and a few confidential friends until after the lapse of a century, when the time came to commemorate the achievements of their ancestor.

How much of the current tradition is fact and how much fiction is hard to determine, as so little of the original documentary material is now available. The collection of materials herewith presented consists of what purport to be authentic copies of the original documents in question. They are put in this form in the belief that their significance warrants it, and in the hope that their publication may elicit further light on the subject. These materials consist of three sorts, viz.; a transcript of the Diary of James Lemen, Sr., a manuscript History of the confidential relations of Lemen and Jefferson, prepared by Rev. John M. Peck, and a series of letters from various public men to Rev. James Lemen, Jr. The Diary and manuscript "History" were located by the compiler of this collection among the papers of the late Dr. Edward B. Lemen, of Alton, Illinois. These documents are now in the possession of his son-in-law, Mr. Wykoff, who keeps them in his bank vault. The collection of letters was published at various times by Mr. Joseph B. Lemen, of Collinsville, Illinois, in *The Belleville Advocate*, of Belleville, Illinois. The Diary is a transcript of the original, attested by Rev. James Lemen, Jr. The "History" is a brief sketch, in two chapters, prepared from the original documents by Dr. Peck while he was pastor of the Bethel Church, in June, 1851, and written at his dictation by the hand of an assistant, as the document itself expressly states. Mr. Joseph Lemen, who is responsible for the letters, is the son of Rev. James Lemen, Jr., and one of the editors of the Lemen Family History. The editor of *The Belleville Advocate* states that Mr. Lemen has contributed to various metropolitan newspapers in the political campaigns of his party, from those of Lincoln to those of McKinley.<sup>31</sup> He

also contributed extended sketches of the Baptist churches of St. Clair county for one of the early histories of that county. He took an active part in promoting the movement to commemorate his grandfather, James Lemen, Sr., in connection with the centenary anniversaries of the churches founded at New Design and Quentin Creek (Bethel).

The originals of these materials are said to have composed part of a collection of letters and documents known as the "Lemen Family Notes," which has aroused considerable interest and inquiry among historians throughout the country. The history of this collection is somewhat uncertain. It was begun by James Lemen, Sr., whose diary, containing his "Yorktown Notes" and other memoranda, is perhaps its most interesting survival. While residing in the station fort on the Mississippi Bottom during the Indian troubles of his early years in the Illinois country, he made a rude walnut chest in which to keep his books and papers. This chest, which long continued to be used as the depository of the family papers, is still preserved, in the Illinois Baptist Historical Collection, at the Carnegie Library, Alton, Illinois. It is said that Abraham Lincoln once borrowed it from Rev. James Lemen, Jr., for the sake of its historical associations, and used it for a week as a receptacle for his own papers. Upon the death of the elder Lemen the family notes and papers passed to James, Jr., who added to it many letters from public men of his wide circle of acquaintance.

As the older portions of the collection were being worn and lost, by loaning them to relatives and friends, copies were made of all the more important documents, and the remaining originals were then placed in the hands of Dr. J. M. Peck, who was at the time pastor of the Bethel Church, to be deposited in the private safe of a friend of his in St. Louis. As the slavery question was then (1851) at white heat, it is not surprising that Dr. Peck advised the family to carefully preserve all the facts and documents relating to their father's anti-slavery efforts "until some future time," lest their premature publication should disturb the peace of his church. As late as 1857 he writes of "that dangerous element in many of the old letters bearing on the anti-slavery contest of 1818," and adds, "With some of those interested in that contest, in fifty years from this time, the publication of these letters would create trouble between the descendants of many of our old pioneer families." <sup>6</sup>

A man by the name of J. M. Smith is suggested by Dr. Peck as the custodian of the originals. When this gentleman died, the documents in his care are supposed to have been either lost or appropriated by parties unknown to the Lemen family. Mr. Joseph B. Lemen relates that a certain party at one time represented to the family that he had located the papers and offered, for a suitable consideration, to recover them. This proved to be merely a scheme to obtain money under false pretenses.<sup>6</sup> Various other accounts are current of the disposition of the original papers; but as yet none of them have been located.

The transcripts of the collection, made by James Lemen, Jr., came into the hands of his son; Joseph Bowler Lemen, who is responsible for the publication of various portions of the story, including some of the letters entire. Even these copies, however, are not accessible at the present time, except that of the Lemen Diary, as located by the present writer. Joseph Lemen's account of the fate of the elusive documents is given in full at the end of this publication. He there states that every paper of any value was copied and preserved, but even these copies were dissipated to a large extent. He also claims that all the facts contained in these documents have been published in one form or another, "except a very few, including Rev. James Lemen's interviews with Lincoln, as written up by Mr. Lemen on ten pages of legal cap paper." This Joseph B. Lemen is now far advanced in years, has long been a recluse, and has the reputation of being "peculiar." In a personal interview with him, the present writer could elicit no further facts regarding the whereabouts of the "Lemen Family Notes." Nevertheless, the discovery of the copy of the Lemen Diary and the manuscript of Dr. Peck's "History" gives encouragement to hope for further discoveries, which should be reported to the Chicago Historical Society.

## DOCUMENTS

### I. DIARY OF REV. JAMES LEMEN, SR.

Ridge Prairie, Ill. June 4, 1867.

The within notes are a true copy of the notes kept by the Rev. James Lemen, Sr., when in the siege at Yorktown. The original notes were fading out.

By his son, REV. JAMES LEMEN, JR.

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Near Yorktown, Va. Sep. 26, 1781.

My enlistment of two years expired some time ago, but I joined my regiment to-day and will serve in this siege.

Quarters, near Yorktown, Sept. 27, 1781.

I was on one of the French ships to-day with my captain. There is a great fleet of them to help us, it is said, if we fight soon.

Sept. 30, 1781, Near Yorktown.

Our regiment has orders to move forward this morning, and the main army is moving.

Near Yorktown. Oct. 3, 1781.

I was detailed with four other soldiers to return an insane British soldier who had come into our lines, as we don't want such prisoners.

Near Yorktown. Oct. 4, 1781.

I carried a message from my Colonel to Gen. Washington to-day. He recognized me and talked very kindly and said the war would soon be over, he thought. I knew Washington before the war commenced.



Near Yorktown. Oct. 4, 1781.

I saw Washington and La Fayette looking at a French soldier and an American soldier wrestling, and the American threw the Frenchman so hard he limped off, and La Fayette said that was the way Washington must do to Cornwallis.

Near Yorktown. Oct. 5, 1781.

Brother Robert is sick to-day, but was on duty. There was considerable firing to-day. There will be a great fight soon.

Near Yorktown. Oct. 15, 1781.

I was in the assault which La Fayette led yesterday evening against the British redoubt, which we captured. Our loss was nine killed and thirty-four wounded.

Near Yorktown. Oct. 15, 1781.

Firing was very heavy along our lines on Oct. 9th and 10th, and with great effect, but this redoubt and another was in our way and we Americans under La Fayette captured one easily, but the French soldiers who captured the other suffered heavily. They were also led by a Frenchman.

Yorktown. Oct. 19, 1781.

Our victory is great and complete. I saw the surrender to-day. Our officers think this will probably end the war.

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Ridge Prairie, Ill. June 4, 1867.

I have examined the within notes and find them to be correct copies of notes kept by Rev. James Lemen, Sr., which were fading out. He originally kept his confidential notes, as to his agreement with Thomas Jefferson, in a private book, but as this is intended for publication at some future time, they are all copied together. †

By his son, REV. JAMES LEMEN, JR.

Harper's Ferry, Va. Dec. 11, 1782.

Thomas Jefferson had me to visit him again a short time ago, as he wanted me to go to the Illinois country in the North West, after a year or two, in order to try to lead

and direct the new settlers in the best way and also to oppose the introduction of slavery in that country at a later day, as I am known as an opponent of that evil, and he says he will give me some help. It is all because of his great kindness and affection for me, for which I am very grateful, but I have not yet fully decided to do so, but have agreed to consider the case.

Dec. 20, 1782.

During the war, I served a two years' enlistment under Washington. I do not believe in war except to defend one's country and home and in this case I was willing to serve as faithfully as I could. After my enlistment expired I served again in the army in my regiment under Washington, during the siege of Yorktown, but did not again enlist, as the officers thought the war would soon end.

May 2, 1784.

I saw Jefferson at Annapolis, Maryland, to-day and had a very pleasant visit with him. I have consented to go to Illinois on his mission and he intends helping me some, but I did not ask nor wish it. We had a full agreement and understanding as to all terms and duties. The agreement is strictly private between us, but all his purposes are perfectly honorable and praiseworthy.

Dec. 28, 1785.

Jefferson's confidential agent gave me one hundred dollars of his funds to use for my family, if need be, and if not to go to good causes, and I will go to Illinois on his mission next Spring and take my wife and children.

Sept. 4, 1786. *Leto*

In the past summer, with my wife and children I arrived at Kaskaskia, Illinois, and we are now living in the Bottom settlement. On the Ohio river my boat partly turned over and we lost a part of our goods and our son Robert came near drowning.

May 10, 1787.

I am very well impressed with this new country, but we are still living in the Bottom, as the Indians are unsafe. We prefer living on the high lands and we shall get us a place there soon. People are coming into this new country in increasing numbers.

New Design, Ill. Feb. 26, 1794.

My wife and I were baptized with several others to-day in Fountain Creek by Rev. Josiah Dodge. The ice had to be cut and removed first.

New Design, May 28, 1796.

Yesterday and to-day, my neighbors at my invitation, gathered at my home and were constituted into a Baptist church, by Rev. David Badgley and Joseph Chance.

New Design, Jan. 4, 1797.

We settled here some time ago and are well pleased with our place. It is more healthy than the Bottom country. A fine sugar grove is near us and a large lake with fine fish, and soil good, but the Indians are not yet to be trusted. We have been here now a number of years and have quite a farm in cultivation and fairly good improvements.

New Design, Jan. 6, 1798.

I have just returned with six of my neighbors from a hunt and land inspection upon what is called Richland country and creek. We had made our camp near that creek before. On the first Sunday morning in December held religious services and on Monday went out to see the land. We found fine prairie lands some miles north, south and east and some timber lands along the water streams mostly. Game is plentiful and we killed several deer and turkeys. It is a fine country.

New Design, May 3, 1803.

As Thomas Jefferson predicted they would do, the extreme southern slave advocates are making their influence felt in the new territory for the introduction of slavery and they are pressing Gov. William Henry Harrison to use his power and influence for that end. Steps must soon be taken to prevent that curse from being fastened on our people.

New Design, May 4, 1805.

At our last meeting, as I expected he would do, Gov. Harrison asked and insisted that I should cast my influence for the introduction of slavery here, but I not only denied the request, but I informed him that the evil attempt would encounter my most active opposition in every possible and honorable manner that my mind could suggest or my means accomplish.

New Design, May 10, 1805.

Knowing President Jefferson's hostility against the introduction of slavery here and the mission he sent me on to oppose it, I do not believe the pro-slavery petitions with which Gov. Harrison and his council are pressing Congress for slavery here can prevail while he is President, as he is very popular with Congress and will find means to overreach the evil attempt of the pro-slavery power.

Jan. 20th 1806.

<sup>15</sup>As Gov. William Henry Harrison and his legislative council have had their petitions before Congress at several sessions asking for slavery here, I sent a messenger to Indiana to ask the churches and people there to get up and sign a counter petition to Congress to uphold freedom in the territory and I have circulated one here and we will send it on to that body at next session or as soon as the work is done.

New Design. Sept. 10, 1806.

<sup>19</sup>A confidential agent of Aaron Burr called yesterday to ask my aid and sympathy in Burr's scheme for a South-western Empire with Illinois as a province and an offer to make me governor. But I denounced the conspiracy as high treason and gave him a few hours to leave the territory on pain of arrest.

New Design. Jan 10, 1809 [1810].

<sup>20</sup>I received Jefferson's confidential message on Oct. 10, 1808, suggesting a division of the churches on the question of slavery and the organization of a church on a strictly anti-slavery basis, for the purpose of heading a movement to finally make Illinois a free State, and after first trying in vain for some months to bring all the churches over to such a basis, I acted on Jefferson's plan and Dec. 10, 1809, the anti-slavery element formed a Baptist church at Cantine creek, on an anti-slavery basis.

New Design. Mar. 3, 1819.

I was reared in the Presbyterian faith, but at 20 years of age I embraced Baptist principles and after settlement in Illinois I was baptized into that faith and finally became a minister of the gospel of that church, but some years before I was licensed to preach, I was active in collecting and



inducing communities to organize churches, as I thought that the most certain plan to control and improve the new settlements, and I also hoped to employ the churches as a means of opposition to the institution of slavery, but this only became possible when we organized a leading church on a strictly anti-slavery basis, an event which finally was marked with great success, as Jefferson suggested it would be.

New Design. Jan 10, 1820.

My six sons all are naturally industrious and they all enjoy the sports. Robert and Josiah excel in fishing, Moses in hunting, William in boating and swimming and James and Joseph in running and jumping. Either one of them can jump over a line held at his own height, a little over six feet.

New Design. Jan. 12, 1820.

A full account of my Indian fights will be found among my papers.

New Design. Dec. 10, 1820.

Looking back at this time, 1820, to 1809, when we organized the Canteen creek Baptist Church on a strictly anti-slavery basis as Jefferson had suggested as a [center] from which the anti-slavery movement to finally save the State to freedom could be directed, it is now clear that the move was a wise one as there is no doubt but that it more than anything else was what made Illinois a free State.

New Design, Ill. Jan. 4, 1821.

Among my papers my family will find a full and connected statement as to all the churches I have caused to be formed since my settlement in Illinois.

There were many of our family notes which were faded out and Rev. J. M. Peck retained some when he made father's history and many were misplaced by other friends, but we have had all copied [that] are now in our possession which are of interest.

REV. JAMES LEMEN, JR.,  
(Son of Rev. James Lemen, Sr.).

Ridge Prairie, Ill. June 4, 1867.

My father's account of his Indian fights and statement of all the churches he caused to be founded in Illinois, above

mentioned, were loaned to Rev. John M. Peck a short time before his death and have not been returned, but the information contained has already been published except a few confidential facts as to his relations with Jefferson in the formation of the Canteen Creek Baptist Ch., now the Bethel Baptist Church.

REV. JAMES LEMEN, JR.

(Son of James Lemen, Sr.)

## II. PECK'S HISTORY OF THE JEFFERSON-LEMEN COMPACT

Rock Spring, Ill., June 4, 1851.

The history of the confidential relation of Rev. James Lemen, Senior, and Thomas Jefferson, and Lemen's mission under him, which I have prepared for his son, Rev. James Lemen, Junior, at his request from the family notes and diaries.

J. M. PECK,

Per A. M. W.

### CHAPTER I.

The leading purpose of Thomas Jefferson in selecting James Lemen, of Virginia, afterwards James Lemen, Senior, to go to Illinois as his agent, was no doubt prompted by his great affection for Mr. Lemen and his impression that a young man of such aptitude as a natural leader would soon impress himself on the community, and as the advantages in the territory were soon to be great, Jefferson was desirous to send him out, and with the help of a few friends he provided a small fund to give him, and also his friend who was going to Indiana on a like mission, to be used by their families if need be, and if not to go to good causes. There was also another motive with Jefferson; he looked forward to a great pro-slavery contest to finally try to make Illinois and Indiana slave states, and as Mr. Lemen was a natural born anti-slavery leader and had proved himself such in Virginia by inducing scores of masters to free their slaves through his prevailing kindness of manner and Christian arguments, he was just Jefferson's ideal of a man who could safely be trusted with his anti-slavery mission in Illinois, and this was an important factor in his appointment.

The last meeting between Mr. Lemen and Jefferson was at Annapolis, Maryland, on May 2, 1784, a short time before

he sailed as envoy to France, and all the terms between them were fully agreed upon, and on Dec. 28, 1785, Jefferson's confidential agent gave Mr. Lemen one hundred dollars of his funds, and in the summer of 1786 with his wife and children he removed and settled in Illinois, at New Design, in what is now Monroe County. A few years after his settlement in Illinois Mr. Lemen was baptized into the Baptist church, and he finally became a minister of the people of that faith. He eventually became a great organizer of churches and by that fact, reinforced by his other wonderful traits as a natural leader, he fully realized Jefferson's fondest dreams and became a noted leader.

In 1789 Jefferson returned from his mission to France and his first thought was of Mr. Lemen, his friend in Illinois, and he lost no time in sending him a message of love and confidence by a friend who was then coming to the West. <sup>5</sup>After Jefferson became President of the United States he retained all of his early affection for Mr. Lemen, and when S. H. Biggs, a resident of Illinois, who was in Virginia on business and who was a warm friend of both Jefferson and Mr. Lemen, called on him in 1808, when President, he inquired after him with all the fondness of a father, and when told of Mr. Lemen's purpose to soon organize a new church on a strictly anti-slavery basis Jefferson sent him a message to proceed at once to form the new church and he sent it a twenty-dollar contribution. Acting on Jefferson's suggestion, Mr. Lemen promptly took the preliminary steps for the final formation of the new church and when constituted it was called the Baptist Church of Canteen Creek and Jefferson's contribution, with other funds, were given to it. This church is now called the Bethel Baptist Church, and it has a very interesting history.

But in view of the facts and circumstances the church might properly have been called the "Thomas Jefferson Church," and what volumes these facts speak for the beneficent and marvelous influence which Mr. Lemen had over Jefferson, who was a reputed unbeliever. The great love he had for James Lemen not only induced him to tolerate his churches but he became an active adviser for their multiplication.

<sup>30</sup>The original agreement between Jefferson and Mr. Lemen was strictly confidential; on the part of Jefferson, because, had it been known, his opponents would have

said he sent paid emissaries to Illinois and Indiana to shape matters to his own interests, and the extreme South might have opposed his future preferment, if it were known that he had made an anti-slavery pact with his territorial agents; and it was secret on the part of Mr. Lemen because he never wished Jefferson to give him any help and his singularly independent nature made him feel that he would enjoy a greater liberty of action, or feeling at least, if it were never known that his plans and purposes to some extent were dictated and controlled by another, not even by his great and good friend Jefferson; so the agreement between them was strictly private. <sup>30</sup>And there was another circumstance which finally determined Mr. Lemen to always preserve the secrecy, and that was that some of Mr. Jefferson's opponents shortly before Mr. Lemen's death informed him that he had become an absolute unbeliever, and this so impressed his mind that he wept bitterly for fear, if the fact should ever be known that he had an agreement with Jefferson, that they would say that he was in alliance with an unbeliever in the great life work he had performed, and he exacted a promise from his sons, his brother-in-law, Rev. Benjamin Ogle, and Mr. Biggs, the only persons who then knew of the agreement, that they would never divulge it during his lifetime, a pledge they all religiously kept, and in later years they told no one but the writer and a few other trusted friends who have not, and never will, betray them. But the writer advised them to carefully preserve all the facts and histories we are now writing and to tell some of their families and let them publish them at some future time, as much of the information is of public interest.

As to Jefferson's being an absolute unbeliever, his critics were mistaken. He held to the doctrine that the mind and the reason are the only guides we have to judge of the authenticity and credibility of all things, natural and divine, and this appears to have been the chief basis on which Jefferson's critics based their charges against him. But while these harsh criticisms in some measure misled Mr. Lemen he never lost his great love for Jefferson and to the latest day of his life he always mentioned his name with tenderness and affection. I had hoped to complete this history in one chapter, but there appear to be notes and materials enough for another. By oversight the notes of Mr. Lemen's war record were not given me, but he honorably served an enlist-



ment of two years under Washington, and returned to his regiment at the siege of Yorktown and served until the surrender of Cornwallis, but did not re-enlist.

## CHAPTER II.

At their last meeting at Annapolis, Maryland, on May 2, 1784, when the final terms in their agreement as to Mr. Lemen's mission in Illinois were made, both he and Jefferson agreed that sooner or later, there would be a great contest to try to fasten slavery on the Northwestern Territory, and this prophesy was fully verified in spite of the fact that Congress, at a later period, passed the Ordinance of 1787 forever forbidding slavery; two contests arose in Illinois, the first to confirm the territory and the second to confirm the state to freedom.

<sup>17</sup>From 1803 for several successive congresses Gen. William Henry Harrison, then governor of the Northwestern Territory, with his legislative council petitioned that body to repeal the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787 and to establish slavery in the territory, but without avail, and finally recognizing that the influence of Rev. James Lemen, Sr., was paramount with the people of Illinois, he made persistent overtures for his approval of his pro-slavery petitions, but he declined to act and promptly sent a messenger to Indiana, paying him thirty dollars of the Jefferson fund given him in Virginia to have the church and people there sign a counter petition, meanwhile circulating one in Illinois among the Baptists and others; and at the next session of Congress Gen. Harrison's pro-slavery petitions for the first time encountered the anti-slavery petitions of the Baptist people and others, and the senate, before which the matter went at that time, voted to sustain the anti-slavery petitions and against the repeal of the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787, and for the time the contest ended.

<sup>21</sup>The next anti-slavery contest was in the narrower limits of the territory of Illinois, and it began with the events which called the Bethel Baptist Church into existence. When Mr. Lemen received President Jefferson's message in 1808 to proceed at once to organize the next church on an anti-slavery basis and make it the center from which the anti-slavery forces should act to finally make Illinois a free state, he decided to act on it; but as he knew it would create

a division in the churches and association, to disarm criticism he labored several months to bring them over to the anti-slavery cause, but finding that impossible he adopted Jefferson's advice and prepared to open the contest. The first act was on July 8, 1809, in regular session of the Richland Creek Baptist Church, where the people had assembled from all quarters to see the opening of the anti-slavery contest, when Rev. James Lemen, Sr., arose and in a firm but friendly Christian spirit declared it would be better for both sides to separate, as the contest for and against slavery must now open and not close until Illinois should become a state. A division of both the association and the churches followed, but finally at a great meeting at the Richland Creek Baptist Church in a peaceful and Christian manner, as being the better policy for both sides, separation was adopted by unanimous vote and a number of members withdrew, and on Dec. 10, 1809, they formed the "Baptist Church at Canteen Creek," (now Bethel Baptist Church). Their articles of faith were brief. They simply declared the Bible to be the pillar of their faith, and proclaimed their good will for the brotherhood of humanity by declaring their church to be "The Baptist Church of Christ, Friends to Humanity, denying union and communion with all persons holding the doctrine of perpetual, involuntary, hereditary slavery."

<sup>23</sup>The church, properly speaking, never entered politics, but presently, when it became strong, the members all formed what they called "The Illinois Anti-Slavery League," and it was this body that conducted the anti-slavery contest. It always kept one of its members and several of its friends in the Territorial Legislature, and five years before the constitutional election in 1818 it had fifty resident agents — men of like sympathies — in the several settlements throughout the territory quietly at work, and the masterly manner in which they did their duty was shown by a poll which they made of the voters some few weeks before the election, which, on their side only varied a few votes from the official count after the election. <sup>17</sup>With people familiar with all the circumstances there is no divergence of views but that the organization of the Bethel Church and its masterly anti-slavery contest saved Illinois to freedom; but much of the credit of the freedom of Illinois, as well as for the balance of the territory, was due to Thomas Jefferson's faithful and efficient aid. True to his promise to Mr. Lemen that slavery

should never prevail in the Northwestern Territory or any part of it, he quietly directed his leading confidential friends in Congress to steadily defeat Gen. Harrison's pro-slavery petitions for the repeal of the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787, and his friendly aid to Rev. James Lemen, Sr., and friends made the anti-slavery contest of Bethel Church a success in saving the state to freedom.

In the preparation of this history, to insure perfect reliability and a well-connected statement, I have examined, selected, and read the numerous family notes myself, dictating, while my secretary has done the writing, and after all was completed we made another critical comparison with all the notes to insure perfect accuracy and trustworthiness.

I have had one copy prepared for Rev. James Lemen, Jr., and one for myself. I should have added that of the one hundred dollars of the Jefferson funds given him Rev. James Lemen, Sr., used none for his family, but it was all used for other good causes, as it was not Mr. Lemen's intention to appropriate any of it for his own uses when he accepted it from Jefferson's confidential agent in Virginia.

### III. "HOW ILLINOIS GOT CHICAGO"

(Communication from Joseph B. Lemen, under head of "Voice of the People," in *The Chicago Tribune* some time in December, 1908.)

O'Fallon, Ill., Dec. 21, 1908.

Editor of the Tribune:—In October, 1817, the Rev. James Lemen, Sr., had a government surveyor make a map showing how the boundary of Illinois could be extended northward so as to give a growing state more territory and a better shape and include the watercourses by which Lake Michigan might be connected with the Mississippi river. With these advantages marked in the margin of the map, he gave his plan and map to Nathaniel Pope, our territorial delegate in congress, to secure the adoption of the plan by that body, which he did.

The facts were noted in the Rev. J. M. Peck's pioneer papers and others, and in commenting on them some of our newspapers have recently charged Nathaniel Pope with carelessness in not publishing Mr. Lemen's share in the matter, but unjustly. Mr. Lemen and Mr. Pope were ardent friends, and as the former was a preacher and desired no office, and he wished and sought for no private pre-

ferment and promotion, he expressly declared that as Mr. Pope had carried the measure through Congress with such splendid skill he preferred that he should have the credit and not mention where he got the map and plan.

Rev. Benjamin Ogle, Mr. Lemen's brother-in-law, and others mentioned this fact in some of their papers and notes. The omission was no fault of Mr. Pope's and was contrary to his wish.

The present site of Chicago was included in the territory added, and that is how Illinois got Chicago. PIONEER.

#### IV. ADDRESS TO THE FRIENDS OF FREEDOM

(From *The Illinois Intelligencer*, August 5, 1818.)

The undersigned, happening to meet at the St. Clair Circuit Court, have united in submitting the following Address to the Friends of Freedom in the State of Illinois.

Feeling it a duty in those who are sincere in their opposition to the toleration of slavery in this territory to use all fair and laudable means to effect that object, we therefore beg leave to present to our fellow-citizens at large the sentiments which prevail in this section of our country on that subject. In the counties of Madison and St. Clair, the most populous counties in the territory, a sentiment approaching unanimity seems to prevail against it. In the counties of Bond, Washington, and Monroe a similar sentiment also prevails. We are informed that strong exertions will be made in the convention to give sanction to that deplorable evil in our state; and lest such should be the result at too late a period for anything like concert to take place among the friends of freedom in trying to defeat it, we therefore earnestly solicit all true friends to freedom in every section of the territory to unite in opposing it, both by the election of a Delegate to Congress who will oppose it and by forming meetings and preparing remonstrances against it. Indeed, so important is this question considered that no exertions of a fair character should be omitted to defeat the plan of those who wish either a temporary or unlimited slavery. Let us also select men to the Legislature who will unite in remonstrating to the general government against ratifying such a constitution. At a crisis like this thinking will not do, *acting* is necessary.



From St. Clair county — Risdon Moore, Benjamin Watts, Jacob Ogle, Joshua Oglesby, William Scott, Sr., William Biggs, Geo. Blair, Charles R. Matheny, James Garretson, and <sup>34</sup>William Kinney.

From Madison County — Wm. B. Whiteside.

From Monroe County — James Lemen, Sr.

From Washington — Wm. H. Bradsby.

## V. RECOLLECTIONS OF A CENTENNARIAN

By DR. WILLIAMSON F. BOYAKIN, Blue Rapids, Kansas  
(1807-1907)

(*The Standard*, Chicago, November 9, 1907.)

The Lemen family was of Irish [Scotch] descent. They were friends and associates of Thomas Jefferson. It was through his influence that they migrated West. When the Lemen family arrived at what they designated as New Design, in the vicinity of the present town of Waterloo, in Monroe county, twenty-five miles southeast of the city of St. Louis, Illinois was a portion of the state of Virginia. [Ceded to U. S. two years previous.]

Thomas Jefferson gave them a kind of carte blanche for all the then unoccupied territory of Virginia, and gave them \$30 in gold to be paid to the man who should build the first meeting house on the western frontier.<sup>32</sup> This rudely-constructed house of worship was built on a little creek named Canteen [Quentin], just a mile or two south of what is now called Collinsville, Madison county, Illinois.

In the mountains of Virginia there lived a Baptist minister by the name of Torrence. This Torrence, at an Association in Virginia, introduced a resolution against slavery. In a speech in favor of the resolution he said, "All friends of humanity should support the resolution." The elder James Lemen being present voted for it and adopted it for his motto, inscribed it on a rude flag, and planted it on the rudely-constructed flatboat on which the family floated down the Ohio river, in the summer of 1790 [1786], to the New Design location.<sup>33</sup>

The distinguishing characteristic of the churches and associations that subsequently grew up in Illinois [under the Lemen influence] was the name "The Baptized Church of Christ, Friends to Humanity."



One of these Lemen brothers, Joseph, married a Kinney, sister to him who was afterwards governor [lieutenant governor] of the state. This Kinney was also a Baptist preacher, a Kentuckian, and a pro-slavery man.<sup>34</sup> When the canvass opened in 1816, 17, and 18 to organize Illinois into a state, the Lemens and the Kinneys were leaders in the canvass. The canvass was strong, long, bitter. The Friends to Humanity party won. The Lemen brothers made Illinois what it is, a free state.

The Lemens were personally fine specimens of the genus homo — tall, straight, large, handsome men — magnetic, emotional, fine speakers. James Lemen [Junior] was considered the most eloquent speaker of the day of the Baptist people. Our present educated preachers have lost the hold they should have upon the age in the cultivation of the intellectual instead of the emotional. Religion is the motive power in the intellectual guidance of humanity. These Lemens were well balanced in the cultivation of the intellect and the control of the emotions. They were well educated for their day, self-educated, great lovers of poetry, hymnal poetry, having no taste for the religious debates now so prevalent in some localities. They attended no college commencements [?]. James Lemen, however, at whose grave the monument is to be erected, was for fourteen consecutive years in the Senate of the State Legislature, and would have been elected United States senator, but he would not accept the position when offered. [This was James, Jr., not his father.]

Personally of fine taste, always well and even elegantly dressed, they rode fine horses, owned fine farms, well cultivated. They lived in rich, elegant style [?]. They were brimful and overflowing with spontaneous hospitality. All were married, with several sisters, and were blessed with large families. Almost all of them, parents and descendants, have passed away. Old Bethel, the church house, and the graveyard, in sight of the old mound, are yet there.

NOTE.—Dr. Boyakin was a physician, Baptist minister, and newspaper editor for many years in Illinois. He delivered the G. A. R. address at Blue Rapids, Kansas, on his one hundredth birthday. He has confused some things in these "recollections," especially the story concerning the origin of the name "Friends to Humanity," but for his years his statements are unusually in accord with the facts.

## VI. IN MEMORY OF REV. JAMES LEMEN, SR.

BY A WELL-WISHER

*(The Standard, Chicago, November 16, 1907)*

When James Lemen's early anti-slavery Baptist churches went over to the cause of slavery, it looked as if all were lost and his anti-slavery mission in Illinois had failed. At that crisis Mr. Lemen could have formed another sect, but in his splendid loyalty to the Baptist cause he simply formed another Baptist church on the broader, higher grounds for both God and humanity, and on this high plane he unfurled the banner of freedom. In God's good time the churches and state and nation came up to that grand level of right, light, and progress.

Of James Lemen's sons, under his training, Robert was an eminent Baptist layman, and Joseph, James, Moses, and Josiah were able Baptist preachers. [William, the "wayward" son, also became a useful minister in his later years.] Altogether they were as faithful a band of men as ever stood for any cause. This is the rating which history places upon them. The country owes James Lemen another debt of gratitude for his services to history. He and his sons were the only family that ever kept a written and authentic set of notes of early Illinois; and the early historians, Ford, Reynolds, and Peck, drew many of their facts from that source. These notes embraced the only correct histories of both the early Methodist and the early Baptist churches in Illinois and much other early matter.<sup>35</sup>

NOTE.—This communication was probably from Dr. W. F. Boyakin.

## VII. STATEMENT REGARDING JOSEPH B. LEMEN

"Joseph B. Lemen has written editorially for *The New York Sun*, *The New York Tribune*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The Belleville Advocate*.

"During the McKinley campaign of 1896 he wrote editorials from the farmers' standpoint for a number of the metropolitan newspapers of the country at the personal request of Mark Hanna.

"He also wrote editorials for the metropolitan newspapers during the first Lincoln campaign."

—Editor, *Belleville Advocate*.

December, 1912.

# VIII. HISTORIC LETTER OF REV. J. M. PECK ON THE OLD LEMEN FAMILY NOTES

(From *Belleville Advocate*, January, 1908)

(Clipping in I.B.H.C., K11)

To the Editor of the Belleville Advocate:

We herewith send the Advocate a copy of a letter of the eminent historian and great Baptist divine, the late Rev. J. M. Peck, to his old ministerial associate, the late Rev. James Lemen, concerning the anti-slavery labors of his father, Rev. James Lemen, Sr., and also his views as to the old Lemen family notes, which will perhaps interest your readers. It seems quite appropriate for the Advocate to print these old pioneer matters, as it is one of the old pioneer landmarks. Rev. James Lemen took the paper when it started, under its first name, and it has come to his family or family members at his old home ever since.

By order of the Family.

[JOSEPH B. LEMEN.]

## REV. JAMES LEMEN, SR., AND HIS ANTI-SLAVERY LABORS

Rev. James Lemen,  
Ridge Prairie, Illinois

Dear Brother: At my recent very enjoyable visit at your house you made two important requests, which I will now answer. The first was as to my estimate or judgment of your father's anti-slavery labors, and the second was as to what disposition you had better make of your vast stock of old family notes and papers. Considering your questions in the order named, I will write this letter, or more properly, article, under the above heading of "Rev. James Lemen, Sr., and His Anti-Slavery Labors," as the first question is the most important, and then in conclusion I will notice the second.

In considering your father's anti-slavery labors, I will proceed upon the facts and evidence obtained outside your old family notes, as it might be presumed that the trend of the notes on that matter would be partial. Not that the facts I would use are not found in your family notes, for they appear to cover about every event in our early state and church history; but that I would look for the facts elsewhere to prove the matter, and indeed I can draw largely from my

own knowledge of the facts upon which your father's success as an anti-slavery leader rested. Not only from my own personal observation, but scores of the old pioneers, your father's followers and helpers, have given me facts that fully establish the claim that he was the chief leader that saved Illinois to freedom. Not only the state, but on a wider basis the evidence is very strong that Rev. James Lemen, Sr., largely shared in saving the Northwestern Territory for free states. This was the estimate that General [Governor] William Henry Harrison placed on his labors in his letter to Captain Joseph Ogle after his term of the governorship had expired. <sup>17</sup>In his letter to Captain Ogle he said that, though he and Mr. Lemen were ardent friends, he [Lemen] set his iron will against slavery here and indirectly made his influence felt so strongly at Washington and before Congress, that all efforts to suspend the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787 failed.

But James Lemen was not only a factor which saved the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787, but there is no doubt, after putting all the facts together, . . . that his anti-slavery mission to the Northwestern Territory was inspired by the same cause which finally placed the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance, and that Lemen's mission and that clause were closely connected. Douglas, Trumbull, and Lincoln thought so, and every other capable person who had [been] or has been made familiar with the facts.

Many of the old pioneers to whom the facts were known have informed me that all the statements as to Rev. James Lemen's anti-slavery teaching and preaching and forming his anti-slavery churches, and conducting the anti-slavery contest, and sending a paid agent to Indiana to assist the anti-slavery cause, were all true in every particular; and so the evidence outside and independently of that in the Lemen family notes is conclusive that Mr. Lemen created and organized the forces which finally confirmed Illinois, if not the Northwestern Territory, to freedom. But there was just one fact that made it possible for the old pioneer leader practically single handed and alone to accomplish such results; and that was because President Jefferson's great power was behind him, and through his secret influence Congress worked for the very purpose that Jefferson, more than twenty years before, had sent Lemen to Illinois, or the Northwestern Territory, to secure, namely, the freedom of the



new country. The claim that Mr. Lemen encompassed these great results would, of course, be ridiculous were it not known that the power of the government through Jefferson stood behind him. Hence Douglas, Trumbull, and others are correct, and I quite agree with them, that when you publish the old family notes on the matter, if, for reasons you state, you do not wish to publish Jefferson's letters to your father which concern the subject, it will be sufficient just to say he acted by and under his advice and aid, and people will accept it, as it is self-evident, because it is preposterous to hold that Mr. Lemen could have accomplished such results without some great power behind him. In conclusion, it is my judgment that your father's anti-slavery labors were the chief factor leading up to the free state constitution for Illinois.

Now as to your old family notes. They are valuable. In their respective fields, they embrace by far the most trustworthy history in our state. They ought to be preserved, but your generous nature will not permit you to say no; and your friends, as you say, are carrying them off, and they will all be lost, and presently the vast and priceless collection will have disappeared, which will be an unspeakable loss. Like your friends, Dr. B. F. Edwards and J. M. Smith, I would advise you to make copies of all to keep for use, and then give Smith the old collection to keep and hold in St. Louis in his safe, and leave them there for good. This will save you an infinite amount of worry, as people will not trouble you to see the mere copies. It would be a good disposition to make of them, and thus bury that dangerous element in many of the old letters bearing on the anti-slavery contest of 1818. With some of those interested in that contest, in fifty years from this time, the publication of these letters would create trouble between the descendants of many of our old pioneer families.

There is a danger lurking in many of these old collections where you would not suspect it. In 1851, when I wrote the first or preliminary part of the Bethel church history from your old family notes, now generally referred to as the history of the "Jefferson-Lemen Anti-Slavery Pact," and part second as the history proper of the church in the letter which was simply the history from its organization in 1809 to my pastorate of 1851, I carefully omitted all mention of the anti-slavery contest which gave the church its origin.



I did this so that that part of its history could then be recorded in the church book, which could not have been done had I mentioned the anti-slavery contest; because the bitterness of that period had not yet fully disappeared; and the full history of the church, with the causes creating, and the results flowing from its organization, if recorded or published then, would have aroused considerable ill feeling against the church in some parts of the state. So part second, or the history proper, was only recorded at that time. But having lately completed part third of the Bethel church history, showing the results of its organization, I sent it with a copy of part first, or the history of the Jefferson Lemen Anti-Slavery Pact, to our worthy and noble Christian brother, the Bethel church clerk, James H. Lemen, and the other brother whose name you suggested, and they can place them in safe keeping somewhere until after your old family notes are published, and then they should be recorded in the church book with the church history proper and all the papers be placed with the other church papers. I shall also send them a copy of this letter to be finally placed with the church papers, as it is in part the history of the founder of that church, all parties agreeing that your father created, though of course he did not formally constitute, it. The old church, when all the facts become known, will become noted in history, as it stands as the monument of the contest which began by putting the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787, and which concluded by making Illinois and her neighboring sisters free states.

As to the more valuable letters in your family notes and collections, I have kept them securely for you. Douglas' and Lincoln's letters take very correct views as to your father's anti-slavery labors, and Jefferson's two letters to your father disclose his great friendship for him, and show that he placed the greatest confidence and trust in him. Poor Lovejoy's letter reads as if he had a presentment of his coming doom. There is no more interesting feature in all your old family notes than Lincoln's views at your many meetings with him, and your copy of his prayer is beautiful. Some of his views on Bible themes are very profound; but then he is a very profound thinker. It now looks as if he would become a national leader. Would not he and your father have enjoyed a meeting on the slavery question? I put all the letters with the other papers you gave me in a

safe in St. Louis, in a friend's care, where I sometimes put my papers. Your son, Moses, was with me and the check is given in his name. This will enable you to tell your friends that the papers are not now in your custody, and they will not bother you to see them. Hoping to see you soon, I remain as ever.

Fraternally yours,

Rock Spring, Ill. July 17, 1857.

J. M. PECK.

## PIONEER LETTERS

### IX. SENATOR DOUGLAS'S LETTER

(From *Belleville Advocate*, April 10, 1908. Clipping, I.B.H.C.,—K11)

Springfield, Illinois. Mar. 10, 1857 ✓

Rev. James Lemen,  
Collinsville, Illinois,

Dear Sir:—In a former letter I wrote you fully as to my views as to the "Jefferson-Lemen Anti-Slavery Pact," and that there is no doubt but that the anti-slavery contest of your father, Rev. James Lemen, Sr., and the organizing of Bethel church as one of the results, eventually led to our free state constitution. I also thank you again for the privilege of reading Jefferson's letters to your father, and other papers in connection with the matter, but desire to add a thought or two, or more properly expound [expand] some points in my recent letter.

The anti-slavery pact or agreement between the two men and its far reaching results comprise one of the most intensely interesting chapters in our national and state histories. Its profound secrecy and the splendid loyalty of Jefferson's friends which preserved it, were alike necessary to the success of the scheme as well as for his future preferment; for had it been known that Jefferson had sent Lemen as his special agent on an anti-slavery mission to shape matters in the territories to his own ends, it would have wrecked his popularity in the South and rendered Lemen's mission worse than useless.

It has always been a mystery why the pressing demands of Governor Harrison and his Council for the repeal of the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787 which excluded

slavery from the Northwest Territory, could make no headway before a encession [?] of pro-slavery Congress; but the matter is now clear. The great Jefferson, through his confidential leaders in Congress [held that body back, until Mr. Lemen, under his orders], had rallied his friends and sent in anti-slavery petitions demanding the maintenance of the clause, when the Senate, where Harrison's demands were then pending, denied them. So a part of the honor of saving that grand clause which dedicated the territory to freedom, belongs to your father. Indeed, considering Jefferson's ardent friendship for him and his admiration and approval of his early anti-slavery labors in Virginia, which antedated the Ordinance of 1787 by several years, there is but little doubt but that your father's labors were a factor of influence which quickened if it did not suggest to Jefferson the original purpose which finally resulted in putting the original clause in the Ordinance.

This matter assumes a phase of personal interest with me, and I find myself, politically, in the good company of Jefferson and your father. With them, everything turned on whether the people of the territory wanted slavery or not. Harrison and his council had informed Congress that the people desired it; but Jefferson and Lemen doubted it, and when the latter assisted in sending in great anti-slavery petitions, Jefferson's friends in Congress granted the people their wish, and denied Harrison's pro-slavery demands. That is, the voice and wishes of the people in the territory were heard and respected, and that appears to me to be the correct doctrine.

Should you or your family approve it, I would suggest that the facts of the "Jefferson-Lemen Anti-Slavery Pact" be fully written up and arranged for publication, since they embrace some exceedingly important state and national history, and, in fact, will necessitate a new or larger personal history of Jefferson, as these facts will add another splendid chapter to the great story of his marvellous career. If you think the publication of Jefferson's letters and suggestions to your father would rather tend to dwarf the legitimate importance of his great religious movement in the formation of our early churches, on account of the wonderful political results of the "anti-slavery pact" it would be sufficient to command belief everywhere just to simply state that in his anti-slavery mission and contest he acted under Jefferson's

advice and help; because the consequences were so important and far reaching that it is self-evident he must have had some great and all-prevailing power behind him.

I was greatly pained to learn of your illness, in your last letter, but hope this will find you comfortable.

Yours in confidence,

S. A. DOUGLAS.

I wrote this letter in Springfield, but by an over-sight neglected to mail it there. But if you write me in a fortnight, direct to Springfield, as I expect to be there then.

Yours Secv. [*sic*] D.

## X. ANNOUNCEMENT BY J. B. LEMEN

(From *Belleville Advocate*, April 17, 1908. Clipping, I.B.H.C.,—K11)

It was our purpose in this letter [communication] to send the *Advocate* a copy of one of Abraham Lincoln's letters, and some other matter from him and Douglas, from the old family notes of Rev. James Lemen never yet published; but increased illness, and their greater length, prevented making the copy. In their place, however, we send a copy each of Governor Edward's and Congressman Snyder's letters. The prophetic utterances in this letter as to what would fall on Mexico's treachery and slavery's insolence, were so literally fulfilled that they emphasized anew Congressman Snyder's wonderful capabilities in sizing up public questions correctly and reading the coming events of the future, and prove him to have been a statesman of wonderful powers. The next, which will be the concluding article in this series, will contain the copy of Lincoln's letter and the other matter above referred to.

The typos made one or two slight errors in Senator Douglas's letter in last week's issue. For "expound" the reader should have read "expand," and at another point the letter should read that "Jefferson, through his confidential leaders in Congress, held that body back until Mr. Lemen, under his orders, had rallied his friends and sent in anti-slavery petitions, etc."

[JOSEPH B. LEMEN.]



## XI. GOV. NINIAN EDWARDS TO REV. JAMES LEMEN.

(From *Belleville Advocate*, April 17, 1908. Clipping, I.B.H.C.—K11) .

Vandalia, Ill., Dec. 24, 1826.

Rev. James Lemen,  
Collinsville, Illinois,

Dear Sir:—Having great respect for your influence and reposing perfect confidence in your capable judgment on public affairs, I would be very much pleased to have you call as soon as you arrive here, as I desire to have your views and advice on some important matters. It is my hope, as it will be my pride, that the term upon which I enter shall be marked with a degree of educational interest and progress not hitherto attained in our young commonwealth; and I wish to ask for your counsel and aid in assisting to impress upon the General Assembly the importance of such subjects, and the necessity of some further and better legislation on our school matters; and I also wish to consult with you in regard to the matter of the proposed Illinois and Michigan Canal.

Sincerely your friend,

NINIAN EDWARDS.

## XII. HON. ADAM W. SNYDER TO REV. JAMES LEMEN.

(From *Belleville Advocate*, April 17, 1908. Clipping, I.B.H.C.—K11)

City of Washington, Jan. 5, 1838.

Rev. James Lemen,  
[Collinsville, Illinois]

My Dear Friend:—To the letter which I wrote you a few days since I wish to add that the members of the Illinois delegation in Congress have read the letter you recently wrote me, and they are all willing and ready to assist in pressing the cause of the class of claimants whom you mentioned upon the attention of the government for a more liberal and generous allowance of lands. I have no further news to communicate, except that I believe Mexico's treachery and insolence will sooner or later call down upon her a severe chastisement from this country; and that our Southern friends in Congress are growing exasperatingly and needlessly sensitive on the slavery question, claiming that



Jefferson's views would sustain their positions, not knowing the splendid secret of your father's (Rev. James Lemen, Sr.) anti-slavery mission under Jefferson's orders and advice, which saved Illinois and we might say the Northwest Territory, to freedom. In fact, the demands of slavery, if not controlled by its friends, will eventually put the country into a mood that will no longer brook its insolence and greed.

Yours in esteem and confidence,

A. W. SNYDER.

### XIII. ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LETTER

*Belleville Weekly Advocate*, April 24, 1908

The following letter and remarks from Abraham Lincoln, hitherto unpublished, comprise the fifth letter of the series of old "Pioneer Letters" which Mr. J. B. Lemen of O'Fallon is sending to the Advocate.—Ed.

Springfield, Illinois. March 2, 1857.

Rev. James Lemen,  
[O'Fallon, Illinois,]

Friend Lemen: Thanking you for your warm appreciation of my views in a former letter as to the importance in many features of your collection of old family notes and papers, I will add a few words more as to Elijah P. Lovejoy's case. His letters among your old family notes were of more interest to me than even those of Thomas Jefferson, written to your father. Of course they [the latter] were exceedingly important as a part of the history of the "Jefferson-Lemen Anti-Slavery Pact," under which your father, Rev. James Lemen, Sr., as Jefferson's anti-slavery agent in Illinois, founded his anti-slavery churches, among which was the present Bethel church, which set in motion the forces which finally made Illinois a free state, all of which was splendid; but Lovejoy's tragic death for freedom in every sense marked his sad ending as the most important single event that ever happened in the new world.

Both your father and Lovejoy were pioneer leaders in the cause of freedom, and it has always been difficult for me to see why your father, who was a resolute, uncompromising, and aggressive leader, who boldly proclaimed his purpose to make both the territory and the state free, never aroused nor encountered any of that mob violence which both in

St. Louis and Alton confronted or pursued Lovejoy, and which finally doomed him to a felon's death and a martyr's crown. Perhaps the two cases are a little parallel with those of John and Peter. John was bold and fearless at the scene of the Crucifixion, standing near the cross receiving the Savior's request to care for his mother, but was not annoyed; while Peter, whose disposition to shrink from public view, seemed to catch the attention of members of the mob on every hand, until finally to throw public attention off, he denied his master with an oath; though later the grand old apostle redeemed himself grandly, and like Lovejoy, died a martyr to his faith. Of course, there was no similarity between Peter's treachery at the Temple and Lovejoy's splendid courage when the pitiless mob were closing around him. But in the cases of the two apostles at the scene mentioned, John was more prominent or loyal in his presence and attention to the Great Master than Peter was, but the latter seemed to catch the attention of the mob; and as Lovejoy, one of the most inoffensive of men, for merely printing a small paper, devoted to the freedom of the body and mind of man, was pursued to his death; while his older comrade in the cause of freedom, Rev. James Lemen, Sr., who boldly and aggressively proclaimed his purpose to make both the territory and the state free, was never molested a moment by the minions of violence. The madness and pitiless determination with which the mob steadily pursued Lovejoy to his doom, marks it as one of the most unreasoning and unreasonable in all time, except that which doomed the Savior to the cross.

If ever you should come to Springfield again, do not fail to call. The memory of our many "evening sittings" here and elsewhere, as we called them, suggests many a pleasant hour, both pleasant and helpful.

Truly yours,  
A. LINCOLN.

#### XIV. THE LEMEN MONUMENT AND REV. LEMEN'S PART IN EARLY ILLINOIS HISTORY

(From *Belleville Advocate*, Tuesday, April 6, 1909. Clipping in I.B.H.C.—K11)

The monument to be erected by the Baptist people of Illinois and others at the grave of Rev. James Lemen, Sr., near Waterloo in Monroe county, is not only to honor his

memory as a revolutionary soldier, territorial leader, Indian fighter, and founder of the Baptist cause in Illinois, but it is also in remembrance of the fact that he was the companion and co-worker with Thomas Jefferson in setting in motion the forces which finally recorded the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787, which dedicated the great Northwest territory to freedom and later gave Illinois a free state constitution.

Only recently the Society of the Sons of the Revolution in Chicago, after a critical examination of James Lemen's military and civil record, by unanimous vote, appropriated twenty-five dollars for his monument fund; and we give below a copy of the papers which they used and which will interest our readers, the first being Gen. Ainsworth's letter:

WAR DEPARTMENT  
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE

Washington, Feb. 13, 1908.

The records show that James Lemen served as private in Captain George Wall's Company of the Fourth Virginia Regiment, commanded at various times by Major Isaac Beall and Colonels James Wood and John Neville in the Revolutionary war. Term of enlistment, one year from March 3, 1778.

F. C. AINSWORTH, Adj. Gen.

("In January 1779, James Lemen had his term of enlistment extended for two years and was transferred to another regiment. After his term expired he rejoined his old regiment and served through the siege at Yorktown. He was in several engagements.")

[J. B. L.]

## XV. REV. JAMES LEMEN, SR.

(Written by Rev. John M. Peck, in 1857. Published in *Belleville Advocate*, April 6, 1909. Clipping in I.B.H.C.—K11)

Rev. James Lemen, Sr., a son of Nicholas Lemen and Christian Lemen, his wife, was born at the family home near Harper's Ferry, Virginia, on November 20, 1760. He acquired a practical education and in early manhood married Miss Katherine Ogle, of Virginia, and they reared a family. He enlisted for a year as a soldier of the Revolutionary War, on March 3, 1778, but had his term extended to two years,

and was in several engagements. Sometime after his enlistment expired he rejoined his old comrades and served through the siege at Yorktown.

From childhood, in a singular manner, James Lemen was the special favorite and idol of Thomas Jefferson, who was a warm friend of his father's family. Almost before Mr. Lemen had reached manhood, Jefferson would consult him on all matters, even on great state affairs, and afterwards stated that Mr. Lemen's advice always proved to be surprisingly reliable.

Our subject was a born anti-slavery leader, and by his Christian and friendly arguments he induced scores of masters in Virginia to free their slaves; this quickly caught Jefferson's attention and he freely confessed that Mr. Lemen's influence on him had redoubled his dislike for slavery and, though himself a slaveholder, he most earnestly denounced the institution. The following paragraphs from a letter he wrote to James Lemen's brother, Robert, who then lived near Harper's Ferry, Virginia, on September 10, 1807, will disclose that Mr. Lemen's influence was largely concerned in connection with Jefferson's share in the Ordinance of 1787, in its anti-slavery clause. The paragraph is as follows:—

"If your brother, James Lemen, should visit Virginia soon, as I learn he possibly may, do not let him return until he makes me a visit. I will also write him to be sure and see me. <sup>5</sup>Among all my friends who are near, he is still a little nearer. I discovered his worth when he was but a child and I freely confess that in some of my most important achievements his example, wish, and advice, though then but a very young man, largely influenced my action. This was particularly true as to whatever share I may have had in the transfer of our great Northwestern Territory to the United States, and especially for the fact that I was so well pleased with the anti-slavery clause inserted later in the Ordinance of 1787. Before any one had ever mentioned the matter, James Lemen, by reason of his devotion to anti-slavery principles, suggested to me that we (Virginia) make the transfer and that slavery be excluded; and it so impressed and influenced me that whatever is due me as credit for my share in the matter is largely, if not wholly, due to James Lemen's advice and most righteous counsel. <sup>18</sup>His record in the new country has fully justified my course in inducing



him to settle there with the view of properly shaping events in the best interest of the people. If he comes to Virginia, see that he calls on me."

James Lemen did not visit Virginia and President Jefferson did not get to see him, but his letters to him showed what a great affection he had for his friend and agent. On May 2, 1778 [1784], at Annapolis, Md., Thomas Jefferson and James Lemen made their final agreement under which he was to settle in Illinois to shape matters after Jefferson's wishes, but always in the people's interest and for freedom, and particularly, to uphold the anti-slavery policy promised by Jefferson and later confirmed by the anti-slavery clause in the Ordinance of 1787 which principle both Jefferson and Mr. Lemen expected would finally be assailed by the pro-slavery power, and the facts confirmed their judgment. In 1786 Mr. Lemen with his wife and young family settled finally at New Design, now in Monroe county. <sup>31</sup>He was a judge under the early Territorial law. He finally united with the Baptist church and immediately set about collecting the Baptists into churches, having the first church constituted at his house.

Mr. Lemen created the first eight Baptist churches in Illinois, having them especially declare against slavery and intemperance. When General William Henry Harrison became Governor, he and his Territorial Council went over to pro-slavery influences and demands, and carried Mr. Lemen's seven churches, which he had then created, with them. For some months he labored to call them to anti-slavery grounds, but failing, he declared for a division and created his eighth church, now Bethel church, near Collinsville, on strictly anti-slavery grounds; and this event opened the anti-slavery contest in 1809 which finally in 1818 led to the election of an anti-slavery Convention which gave Illinois a free state constitution. <sup>32</sup>Jefferson warmly approved Mr. Lemen's movement and sent his new church twenty dollars, which, with a fund the members collected and gave, was finally transferred to the church treasury without disclosing Jefferson's identity. This was done in order not to disturb his friendly relations with the extreme South. But Jefferson made no secret of his antipathy for slavery, though unwilling that the fact should be known that he sent James Lemen to the new country especially to defend it against slavery, as he knew it would arouse



the resentment of the extreme pro-slavery element against both him and his agent and probably defeat their movement.

<sup>24</sup>James Lemen also first suggested the plan to extend the boundary of Illinois northward to give more territory and better shape, and had a government surveyor make a map showing the great advantages and gave them to Nathaniel Pope, our territorial delegate, asking him to present the matter, which he did, and Congress adopted the plan. The extension gave the additional territory for fourteen counties and Chicago is included.

James Lemen was a noted Indian fighter in Illinois, ever ready with his trusty rifle to defend the homes of the early settlers against the savage foe, and in every way he fully justified Jefferson's judgment in sending him to look after the best interests of the people in the new territory.

Mr. Lemen possessed every moral and mental attribute in a high degree, and if any one was more marked than another it was his incomparable instinct against oppression, which his wonderful anti-slavery record accentuated as his chief endowment, though in all respects he was well equipped for a leader among men. That instinct, it might be said, fixed his destiny. At Jefferson's request he settled in the new territory to finally oppose slavery. That was before the Ordinance of 1787 with its anti-slavery clause, but Mr. Lemen had Jefferson's assurance beforehand that the territory should be dedicated to freedom; though they both believed the pro-slavery power would finally press for its demands before stated, and the facts proved they were right. The reasons which necessitated the secrecy of the Jefferson-Lemen anti-slavery pact of May 2, 1784, under which Mr. Lemen came to Illinois on his anti-slavery mission at Jefferson's wish, and which was absolutely necessary to its success at first, no longer exists; and the fear of James Lemen's sons that its publication would so overshadow his great church work in Illinois with Jefferson's wonderful personality, as to dwarf his merits, is largely groundless. Senator Douglas, who with others is familiar with all the facts, says that when the matter is fully published and well known, it will give to both Mr. Lemen and Jefferson their proper shares of credit and fame; and, while it will add a new star to Jefferson's splendid fame, it will carry James Lemen along with him as his worthy co-worker and companion.

The subject of our sketch died at his home near Waterloo, Monroe county, on January 8th, 1823, and was buried in the family cemetery near by.

## XVI. OLD LEMEN FAMILY NOTES, JAMES LEMEN HISTORY; AND SOME RELATED FACTS

(MS. Document in I.B.H.C.,—C102. By Jos. B. Lemen)

In 1857, to save the old "Lemen Family Notes" from loss by careless but persistent borrowers, Dr. B. F. Edwards, of St. Louis, and Rev. J. M. Peck, advised Rev. James Lemen, Jr., to make copies of all and then give the original stock to a friend whom they named to keep as his own in a safe vault in St. Louis, if he would pay all storage charges. But at that time he only gave the most important ones to Rev. J. M. Peck to place temporarily in a safe in St. Louis where he sometimes kept his own papers; though some years later he acted on their advice and making copies of all papers and letters of any value, gave the whole original stock to the party mentioned (we do not recall his name, but it is among our papers) [possibly the J. M. Smith mentioned in Dr. Peck's communication to James Lemen, Jr., July 17, 1857] and he placed them in the safe. Shortly after this their holder died, and they passed into the hands of others who removed them to another safe somewhere in St. Louis; but having no further title in the papers, and having copies of all for use, the family finally lost all traces of the papers and the parties holding them, and have only heard from them two or three times in more than 40 years.

A few years ago, when a history of Rev. James Lemen, Jr., and his father, Rev. James Lemen, Sr., was in contemplation, a reputed agent of the parties whom he then claimed held the old family notes, informed us that the family could have them at any time they wished; and we promised some of our friends who wished to see them that after we had used them in connection with the proposed history, the old stock of papers would be placed where they could see and copy them, if they wished. It was intended to have a few of the more important letters photographed for the James Lemen history; though it was said that some years before some one had a few of them photographed and they were so indistinct as to be worthless; but we hoped for better results. But

it finally developed that the reputed agent would expect us to pay him (contrary to our first impressions) quite a round sum of money for the restoration and use of the papers before he would deliver them to us. This awakened suspicions as to his reliability and a detective, to whom we sent his name and number for investigation, informed us that no such man could be found; and undoubtedly he was some dishonest person seeking to obtain money under false pretenses. And so the family, as for many years past, now knows nothing as to the parties who hold the papers or where they are. A singular fatality seems to have awaited all the papers placed at Dr. Peck's disposal or advice. His own papers were generally destroyed or lost, and the old "Lemen Family Notes" placed some years after his death, partly as he had advised, cannot be found. But while Dr. Peck's lost papers are a distinct and irreparable loss, no loss is sustained in the misplacement of the old Lemen notes, as every line or fact of any value in them was copied and the copies are all preserved; and nearly all the more important ones have been published, except a very few, including Rev. James Lemen's interviews with Lincoln, as written up by Mr. Lemen on ten pages of legal cap paper, and that paper will probably be published soon, if it is not held specially for the James Lemen history.

As to that history, it will be delayed for some time, as the writer, who was expected to see to its preparation, was named by the State Baptist Convention as a member of the Baptist State Committee to assist with the James Lemen monument; and much of the matter intended for the history was published in connection with the labors of the State Committee. One object of the history was to secure or to influence that degree of recognition of the importance of the services of Rev. James Lemen, Sr. and his sons, with a few co-workers of the latter, in the early history and interests of both the Baptist cause and the State, on the part of the Baptists, to which the family thought them entitled. But since the Baptists, the "Sons of the Revolution," and others have placed a monument at the grave of the old State leader and Baptist pioneer, the Rev. James Lemen, Sr., it is felt that the object for making the history has already been in part realized. Another circumstance which has delayed it, is the poor health of the writer; so the prospect is that the making of the history will be delayed for some time.

This is written entirely from memory, as the papers and dates to which we refer are not before me, but we will retain a copy and if there proves to be any errors in this one, we will have them corrected. There was such a demand for them that some of Dr. Peck's, Lovejoy's, Douglas's, Lincoln's and some other letters were published, and some of them are included in the papers we send.

Some years ago some one claimed that the old family notes had been found, which led to statements in the papers that they would soon be placed where people could see and read them; but it proved to be a mistake. For the loss of the papers the family do not believe there was any fault with the parties originally holding them, as in fact they had the right to hold them where they pleased, according to the agreement; but that from sudden deaths and other circumstances, they were misplaced.

It should be added that every paper of any value, which was given to the St. Louis parties to hold was copied and the copies preserved, except mere personal, friendship letters, and of these there was quite a large stock; also that much of Dr. Peck's writings and many letters of his and others were loaned out and could not be given to the St. Louis parties to keep, but all of any real value have been copied or published, except the Lemen-Lincoln interviews and some others, and that even some of these copies are loaned out, among them copies of letters from Dr. Peck, Douglas, Lincoln, Lovejoy, if I recall correctly, and others; though the facts or information in them have already been published, except such facts as will be held for the James Lemen history, and we have copies of them, so nothing will be lost.

(Signed) JOSEPH B. LEMEN.

O'Fallon, Illinois,

January 10, 1911.

[N. B. The above communication accompanied the gift of the walnut chest made by the elder James Lemen at Ft. Piggott, which was sent to the custodian of the Baptist Historical Collection at Shurtleff College, early in the year 1913—COMPILER.]



## REFERENCES

1. See p. 26.
2. Reynolds "My Own Times" and "Pioneer History of Illinois."
3. See "Territorial Records of Illinois" (Illinois State Historical Library, *Publication*, III.), and compare p. 54 *post*.
4. See Biographical sketches in "Lemen Family History."
5. See pp. 33, 53.
6. See pp. 27, 28.
7. See pp. 23, 42, 56.
8. Peck, J. M., "Annals of the West," *in loco*.
9. See p. 54 *post*, and Hinsdale, "Old Northwest."
10. Alvord, "Cahokia Records," Introduction.
11. Reynolds, "My Own Times," p. 208.
12. McMaster, "People of United States," II: 30, 31; III: 108; St. Clair Papers.
13. Blake, "History of Slavery," p. 431.
14. See p. 29.
15. See p. 30, and compare No. 16 below.
16. Blake, "History of Slavery," *in loco*.
17. See pp. 35, 36, 43.
18. See p. 53.
19. See p. 30.
20. See p. 30, and compare, Patterson, "Early Illinois," Fergus Historical Coll., No. 14, pp. 141-2.
21. See pp. 30, 35.
22. Reynolds, "My Own Times," p. 170.
23. See p. 36.
24. See p. 55, and compare reference No. 19.
25. See p. 37.
26. See "Centennial History of Madison Co.," I: 52-55.
27. See p. 38.
28. See p. 47.
29. See p. 50.
30. See p. 34.
31. See p. 41.
32. See p. 54.
33. Cf. Smith, J. A., "History of the Baptists," p. 40; Benedict, "History of the Baptists," II: 246-8.
34. See p. 39.
35. See pp. 42, 56 and Peck, J. M., "Father Clark," *in loco*.











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